

## **Statement from Tempe Mayor Corey Woods**

April 8, 2021

The City of Tempe's June 18, 2020, Mayoral Proclamation requiring face coverings remains in effect within the borders of Tempe.

I appreciate our community's understanding that we needed time to have these conversations, and that we as a City Council wanted a chance to discuss this together at a public meeting. We were able to do that tonight. And we were united in our consensus to assert Tempe's right to protect public health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shops, restaurants, event organizers, service businesses and so many more have experienced monumental challenges during this pandemic. Tourism is a major industry in our city. In Tempe this spring – with our local mask mandate in effect – our hotels were showing signs of the types of spring travel spikes we all count on. Around this time in 2020, hotel occupancy in Tempe was at about 18 percent. Now, one year later, hotel occupancy is around 76 percent. While that isn't a 'normal' spring in Tempe, it's major progress – and it's because of the increasing availability of vaccines and the public health precautions we have all taken. Our decision tonight helps provide certainty for hoteliers, restaurants, businesses and visitors.

Our Council was also concerned that the recent Executive Order had shifted the burden of enforcement to our local Tempe businesses. The decision made tonight once again frees businesses to focus on serving our community and continuing the journey toward economic recovery.

Given the discussion amongst the Tempe City Council, City Manager Andrew Ching will work with city staff and outside entities such as Arizona State University and the Arizona Department of Health Services to establish science-based, objective thresholds for Tempe so that we will have indicators about when to responsibly end our city mask mandate. Let's establish a clearer picture of the road ahead for our own community. We would also like the information to be public and transparent. I have confidence we can take the guesswork out of our next steps in Tempe. The City Council can consider these draft thresholds at a future public meeting.

As Tempe has done since its mask proclamation took effect, the city will continue to take an education-first approach to enforcement. This education-first approach was mandated by Gov. Ducey in his June 17, 2020 Executive Order 2020-40. Businesses and individuals failing to comply after education/warnings will be cited.

The City Council truly believes this decision is in the best interests of residents and businesses. If we continue to work together, we will beat this pandemic and return to life as normal sooner rather than later.